

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00
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R 220909Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY VALETTA
USMISSION NATO
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IT
SUBJECT: AN ITALIAN POLITICAL OVERVIEW

SUMMARY. MFA'S MINISTER WALTER GARDINI, DIRGEN FOR
POLITICAL AFFAIRS, RECENTLY REVIEWED THE FOREIGN

POLITICAL HORIZON FROM ITALIAN PERSPECTIVE DURING DCM'S
END-OF-YEAR COURTESY CALL. END SUMMARY.

1. GARDINI'S REMARKS WERE CAST, ALMOST WITHOUT
EXCEPTION, IN TERMS OF THE EC NINE. HE LED WITH A BROAD CAUT-
IONARY NOT THAT NO MAJOR INITIATIVES OR DECISIONS CAN BE
EXPECTED UNTIL THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS IN PLACE
AND ITS VIEWS ARE KNOWN. SUCH IMMOBILISM IS PERHAPS
UNFORTUNATE, BUT NOT ENTIRELY BAD SINCE IT CLEARLY
ILLUSTRATES THE INTIMATE AND INDISPENSABLE LINKAGE
BETWEEN THE NINE AND THE US.

2. THE MID-EAST SCENE HAS "NEW ELEMENTS OF MODERATION"
WHICH GIVE GREATER HOPE THAT PREVIOUSLY FOR A
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THE KEY FACTOR, OF COURSE, HAS
BEEN THE CUTTING OF THE PLO DOWN TO SIZE. NEVERTHE-
LESS, WE SHOULD NOT DELUDE OURSELVES. NEITHER "THE
PALESTINE PROBLEM NOR THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES"
ARE GOING TO GO AWAY. IT IS NECESSARY TO ACT QUICKLY,
BEFORE THE PLO BEGINS TO RECUPERATE AND WHILE THE NEW
AND FRAGILE EGYPTIAN/SYRIAN RAPPORT HOLDS UP. IT IS
UP TO THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE THE LEAD, AND PROMPTLY.

3. ITALY REMAINS MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT MALTA BUT KNOWS
THAT OTHERS ARE NOT EQUALLY SO, SUCH AS THE USG. THE
PROBLEM IS ACKNOWLEDGEDLY A "NEGATIVE" ONE, I.E., HOW
BEST TO DENY MALTESE FACILITIES TO THE USSR IN PEACE-
TIME. AS AN ASIDE, GARDINI SAID THAT THE PROBLEM WAS
NOT RELEVANT TO WARTIME SINCE "OF COURSE, THE SOVIET
FLEET WOULD BE DESTROYED." NONETHELESS IT WAS WORRISOME
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TO ENVISAGE THE SOVIET FLAG BECOMING MUCH MORE VISIBLE
IN THAT PART OF THE MED. THE NINE HAVE AUTHORIZED
FRANCE AND ITALY TO EXPLORE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE WITH
MALTA, AND ONE OF THEIR FIRST INTENTIONS IS TO CHECK
OUT MINTOFF'S VARIOUS CLAIMS OF SUPPORT BY LIBYA,
TUNISIA AND ALGERIA.

4. CYPRUS HAS REMAINED A PROBLEM "TOO LONG." ONLY
THE US HAS ANY REAL ABILITY TO ADVANCE THAT ISSUE, GIVEN
ITS UNIQUE LINKS WITH THE TWO MAJOR PROTAGONISTS.
AT THE SAME TIME, ITALY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NINE
ARE FULLY AWARE OF OUR CONGRESSIONAL CONSTRAINTS, WHICH
HAVE MADE PROGRESS DIFFICULT.

5. IN ANGOLA, THE PRIME PROBLEM REMAINS THE CONTINUING
GUERRILLA WARFARE. "THE MORE INSECURE THE GOA, THE
MORE NEED THEY HAVE FOR RUSSIANS AND CUBAN." CONVERSELY,
WITH GREATER STABILITY, THE GOA COULD BEGIN TO "PUT

SOME DISTANCE" BETWEEN ITSELF AND ITS CURRENT ALLIES. GARDINI COMMENTED THAT THE ANGOLANS IN GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO BE SPLIT, WITH SOME ELEMENTS WANTING TO ENLARGE CONTACTS WITH WESTERN STATES TO BALANCE OFF THE CUBANS AND RUSSIANS, AND OTHER OPPOSED.

6. (IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION DEC 22 WITH CHARGE, MFA'S SECRETARY GENERAL, MANZINI, MADE THE SAME POINT. HAVING SERVED IN LUANDA MANY YEARS AGO, IT WAS HE, IN HIS PRESENT POSITON, WHO HAD PUSHED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ITALIAN EMBASSY TO THE GOA. HIS EXPERIENCE HAD LED HIM TO BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NOT A GREAT DEAL TO CHOOSE BETWEEN NETO, ROBERTO OR SAVIMBI; ALL THREE ARE ESSENTIALLY AFRICAN NATIONISTS AND NONE WOULD BE WILLING "TO SWAP THE PROTUGUESE YOKE FOR A CUBAN OR RUSSIAN ONE." IT IS USEFUL TO HAVE A COMPETENT YOUNG AMBASSADOR THERE AS AN INTERLOCUTOR AND LISTENING POST, AND TO ACT IN THE WESTERN BEHALF. HE INDICATED THAT, CONFIDENTIAL

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BEYOND PERFORMING USEFUL ASSISTANCE TO THE USG IN LUANDA, GOE GOI HAS ALSO BEEN OF ASSISTANCE TO THE FRENCH AND GERMANS. THE FRENCH AND OTHER (UNNAMED) EUROPEANS WOULD NOW LIKE TO SET UP EMBASSIES IN LUANDA BUT SO FAR HAVE RECIEVED EITHER A FLAT "NO" OR EVASIONS. THE WEST WOULD DO WELL TO ENLARGE ITS PRESENCE TO HELP THOSE ANGOLAN ELEMENTS WHICH WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE CUBAN/RUSSIAN INFLUENCE REDUCED.)

7. GARDINI TOUCHED ONLY BRIEFLY ON MOZAMBIQUE, REPORTING THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME SUSPICION OF THE PRESENCE OF A RUSSIAN BASE, "SUCH AS THE ONE AT BERBERA," AT A MOZAMBIQUE PORT WHOSE NAME HE COULD NOT RECALL OFFHAND. HOWEVER, THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN INVITED BY ANGOLAN OFFICALS TO MAKE A "TOURIST" VISIT TO THE SITE WHERE HE COULD SEE FOR HIMSELF THAT THE CHARGE IS FALSE. GARDINI SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT THE AMBASSADOR WOULD BE MAKING THE TRIP, BUT THAT THE MERE INVITATION WOULD TEND TO SHOW THAT THE CHARGE OF A BASE IS INCORRECT.

8. ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS, GARDINI PUT SALT AT THE TOP OF HIS PRIORITY LIST, COUNTING ON AN EARLY AND EFFECTIVE US INITATIVE. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT, "OF COURSE" A MAJOR AND GROWING CONCERN FOR THE WEST IS THE QUESTION OF RELATIVE MILITARY BALANCE, BUT THEN MOVED ON QUICKLY TO CSCE. HERE, HE SAID, CONTINUOUS AND EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION IS NEEDED, AND IS GOING ON, IN THE NINE AND NATO. THE MAIN POINT TO GUARD AGAINST AT BELGRADE WILL BE NOT TO GET INTO A POSITION WHERE THE WESTERN POWERS WILL BE ON THE DEFENSIVE AGINST WP ACCUSATIONS OF

NOT HAVING DONE THOSE THINGS, PARTICULARLY RE BASKET
THREE, WHICH THE FINAL ACT REQUIRES, BUT WHICH HAVE
LONG BEEN STANDARD PRACTICE IN THE WEST ANYWAY. HE
ILLUSTRATED BY WRYLY POINTING TO THE UNBRIDLED ITALIAN
PRESS WHICH COULD HARDLY BE MORE FREE IRRESPECTIVE OF
THE FINAL ACT.

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9. GARDINI REFERRED TO THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AS
FUNDAMENTAL, AND MENTIONED THAT THERE IS SOME QUESTION
AS TO WHETHER THE USSR SHOULD NOT BE PULLED INTO IT,
BUT WITHOUT APPEARING TO FAVOR THE IDEA HIMSELF.

10. COMENT: OTHER THAN HIS EMPHASIS ON THE NEED
FOR FIRM AND PROMPT AMERICAN LEADS, WHAT GARDINI DID
NOT SAY IS PERHAPS AS INTERESTING AS WHAT HE DID.
AT NO TIME DID HE REFER TO THE QUESTION OF DETENTE
PER SE, NOR DID HE BRING UP THE QUESTION OF A POLITICAL
COURSE TOWARD A UNITED EUROPE. BEAUDRY

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